Architectural transitional justice?

Architectural Transitional Justice? Political Renewal within the Scars of a Violent Past

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Abstract

Located at the intersection of political theory, memory studies and architecture, this article tentatively proposes the concept of architectural transitional justice (TJ) to capture architecture's power to provide favourable spaces for two interrelated processes: grappling with a violent past while simultaneously imagining a hopeful future. It argues that architecture can support – though not ensure – political renewal. While TJ scholars have explored architecture's part in memorialization, they have mostly focused on symbolic constructions. This paper shifts focus and examines a broader category of buildings that were integral to the geography of violence but whose function was not primarily symbolic. Such buildings scar the architectural tissue of successor political orders. The paper crosses disciplinary boundaries to understand how communities can valorise these scars, avoiding both nostalgic and *tabula rasa* approaches to reconstruction. The reinvention of two Nazi Flack Towers in Vienna and Hamburg serve as potential instantiations of architectural TJ.

Key words: architectural transitional justice, political memory, political imagination, collective responsibility, Lebbeus Woods, Flak Towers

Introduction

The architectural tissue of many contemporary communities is scarred. Highly mediatised bombed or burnt down residential, commercial or administrative buildings in Aleppo, Sarajevo or Baghdad stand in for the complex violence of war in the international publics' imagination. Ruins are often assessed and used as evidence in public debates, but also international legal processes of accountability.[1] Yet examining ruins need not be the only way of tracing the relationship between architecture and political violence. Reducing the link between architecture and violence to destruction renders us blind to the ways in which architectural constructions can be deployed to inflict political violence, more or less covertly.[2] Such constructions include evident examples, such as military and defence installations (the Atlantic Wall or the Berlin Wall), buildings erected for colonial ends (slave fortresses like Elmina Castle or Cape Coast Castle in Ghana), large scale monumental structures that misrepresent certain groups (Valle de Los Caídos close to Madrid or the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria), and even whole cities built to create a new prototype of citizen –

[1] For a critical account of the assumptions underpinning the use of ruins as evidence, see Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2017).

[2] Herscher proposes that architectural construction can inflict symbolic, economic or political violence thorough its enactment of a certain political vision. Andrew Herscher, 'Warchitecture,' *Assemblage*, no. 41 (April 1, 2000): 31–31, https://doi.org/10.2307/3171291; Andrew Herscher, *Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010); Andrew Herscher and Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, 'Spatial Violence,' *Architectural Theory Review* 19, no. 3 (September 2, 2014): 269–277, https://doi.org/10.1080/13264826.2014.1037538; Andrew Herscher, 'Warchitectural Theory,' *Journal of Architectural Education* 61, no. 3 (February 1, 2008): 35–43, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1531-314X.2007.00167.x.

Bucharest's systemic reinvention in the wake of the 1977 earthquake being a case in point.

This paper's tentatively proposes the concept of architectural transitional justice (TJ) to shed light on a particular aspect of the aftermath of violence. As a research field, TJ has been focusing on the judicial, political, socio-economic and symbolic aspects of dealing with a violent past. TJ scholars doing research on memorialisation have recently touched on the materiality of violence, in relation to grave sites and human remains.[3] They have also contributed to existing literatures in history and cultural studies,[4] focusing on public monuments, mausoleums, statues, cemeteries and other quintessentially symbolic buildings and the memorial measures meant to mark

[3] Andrea Purdeková, 'Displacements of Memory: Struggles against the Erosion and Dislocation of the Material Record of Violence in Burundi,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 11, no. 2 (July 1, 2017): 339–58, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijx012; Nathalie Koc-Menard, 'Notes from the Field: Exhuming the Past After the Peruvian Internal Conflict,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 8, no. 2 (July 1, 2014): 277–88, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/iju003; Melanie Klinkner, 'Forensic Science for Cambodian Justice,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 2, no. 2 (July 1, 2008): 227–43, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijn015; Francisco Ferrándiz, Antonius C. G. M. Robben, and Richard Wilson, *Necropolitics: Mass Graves and Exhumations in the Age of Human Rights*, First edition, Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Jonah S. Rubin, 'Transitional Justice against the State: Lessons from Spanish Civil Society-Led Forensic Exhumations,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 8, no. 1 (March 1, 2014): 99–120, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijt033.

[4] Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies*, Public Planet Books (Durham, [NC]: Duke University Press, 1998); Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Duncan Bell, 'Agonistic Democracy and the Politics of Memory,' *Constellations* 15, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 148–66, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8675.2008.00478.x; Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*; Annie Coombes, *History after Apartheid* (Durham, [NC]: Duke University Press, 2003).

discontinuity with violent regimes.[5] This literature has found new impetus after the Rhodes Must Fall campaign, which has challenged colonial visions of historical memory and knowledge.[6] Notwithstanding the weight of symbolic constructions and sites and their centrality to TJ projects, the relationship between past violence and the built environment cannot be reduced to them. A more encompassing account of architectural TJ must address the challenge of re-designing and re-signifying a broader category of buildings that played an integral part in the geography of political violence, buildings that cannot, however, be reduced to a symbolic function. Once the community no longer

[5] Elizabeth Jelin, 'Public Memorialization in Perspective: Truth, Justice and Memory of Past Repression in the Southern Cone of South America,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 138–56, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijm006; Janine Natalya Clark, 'Reconciliation through Remembrance? War Memorials and the Victims of Vukovar,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 7, no. 1 (March 1, 2013): 116–35, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijs031; Brandon Hamber, Liz Ševčenko, and Ereshnee Naidu, 'Utopian Dreams or Practical Possibilities? The Challenges of Evaluating the Impact of Memorialization in Societies in Transition,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4, no. 3 (November 1, 2010): 397–420, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijq018; Sebina Sivac-Bryant, 'The Omarska Memorial Project as an Example of How Transitional Justice Interventions Can Produce Hidden Harms,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 9, no. 1 (March 1, 2015): 170–80, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/iju023; Christiane Wilke, 'Remembering Complexity? Memorials for Nazi Victims in Berlin,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 7, no. 1 (March 1, 2013): 136–56, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijs035; Mihaela Mihai, 'Democratic "Sacred Spaces": Public Architecture and Transitional Justice,' in *Theorizing Transitional Justice*, ed. Claudio Corradetti, Nir Eisikovits, and Jack Rotondi (Routledge, 2016), 167–81.

[6] Cynthia Kros, 'Rhodes Must Fall: Archives and Counter-Archives,' *Critical Arts* 29 (January 1, 2015): 150; John Newsinger, 'Why Rhodes Must Fall,' *Race & Class* 58, no. 2 (October 1, 2016): 70–78, https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396816657726; Xolela Mangcu, 'Shattering the Myth of a Post-Racial Consensus in South African Higher Education: "Rhodes Must Fall" and the Struggle for Transformation at the University of Cape Town,' *Critical Philosophy of Race* 5, no. 2 (July 1, 2017): 243–266, https://doi.org/10.5325/critphilrace.5.2.0243.

identifies with the violent political project these constructions were associated with, they become scars on its architectural tissue, reminders of a shameful past, but also, I argue, resources for imagining a different future. In what follows I aim to propose a set of ideas about how we could architecturally deal with scars in a way that valorises them for broader processes of democratisation.

The general questions motivating this paper are: how can architecture contribute to processes of collective memory production in ways that feed both the hope in the possibility of a democratic future and the imagination necessary to outline it, without thereby erasing the violent past? What kind of spaces – symbolic and material – can we open for the flourishing inclusive and just political visions for the future, given the often ineliminable presence of architectural scars from an oppressive past? By 'symbolic' here I am referring to the discursive meanings associated with certain ways of organizing built space, while the term 'material' covers the actual physical distribution of space through architectural interventions.

Located at the intersection between political theory, memory studies, and architectural theory, this paper seeks to answer these questions by bringing these disciplines in a productive conversation. The hope is to add a new dimension to the broad field of memory studies and TJ by foregrounding the architectural dimension of political renewal. It strives to articulate a set of conceptual tools for thinking about the architecture that scars cities worldwide, but also analyse two case studies that ground the theoretical contribution.

In dialogue with architectural and political theory, the first part proposes an account of architecture's agency that deflects over-enthusiastic, unreflective

celebrations of architecture's ability to shape behaviour. Instead, it argues that architecture serves as the infrastructure – simultaneously material and symbolic – of political memory. Moreover, it can also provide sources of meaning and physical spaces for collective practices of imagining and exploring a democratic future. It is at this point that Lebbeus Woods' work in architectural theory becomes relevant. The second part proposes that his reflections on architectural scabs and scars and on how they can be transformed into democratically productive spaces through architectural interventions, supplies important insights into architecture's facilitating political renewal.[7] While recognising Woods's contribution, the paper goes beyond his focus on ruins and expands his categories of scabs and scars to include other constructions associated with violent orders. The third part introduces buildings that mark the skyline of two European cities – Hamburg and Vienna. Two anti-aircraft Flak Towers in Esterházy Park and on Neuhöfer Strasse serve as examples that come closest to the kind of architectural approach to scars advocated here, one that bridges the gap between a past of violence and an uncertain future of freedom and democracy. As massive, recognisable military installations, the towers were an integral part of WWII's devastating violence. It is perhaps because of their sheer size, location and indestructibility that they force communities to think about their possible reinvention, giving architects an opportunity to reimagine them as spaces for cultural and political renewal. Converting them to include spaces of memory but not reducing them to

[7] I am aware of Woods's drawings never materialized in built form. I see accounts that focus exclusively on – or that prioritize – an architect's built output as unnecessarily impoverishing our understanding of architecture as an institutionalized practice.

memorialisation, the Flaks lend themselves to various uses by visitors and inhabitants. Green energy production, education, leisure and sport – can all occupy the freespaces inserted within the scars. Refusing to read them as templates, the paper gestures towards a possible way of rethinking architecture's role in the wake of violence. As it will become evident, however, it is up to the communities within and around the buildings to appropriate them in ways that does not obscure the past but does not remain captive to it either. The conclusion addresses several potential criticisms and tackles one specific risk inherent in any transformative project that has freedom at its core: the risk that outcomes might obstruct, rather than instantiate, practices of freedom.

The Agency of Architecture

What can architecture do in the wake of political violence? How can we deal with architectural scars, i.e. constructions marked *by* or used *for* violent purposes? This section reflects on the power of architectural form to provide propitious space for two interrelated processes: dealing with a painful past while simultaneously experimenting with visions of the future. I argue architecture can productively support – though not ensure – political renewal to the extent that it provides spaces for the productive interplay between political memory and the imagination. Architecture can serve as the midwife of political and social regeneration on condition that it facilitate the play of political improvisation, valorising – rather than obscuring – the scars that mark the body politic, symbolically and materially.

The relationship between architecture and the political constitutes a fertile object of inquiry. Simultaneously dependent *on*, and potentially

transformative *of* politics, architecture 'is of its nature assertive – it proposes a certain way of doing things, of bringing together or separating activities – and this will either create an order that affronts or one that enhances the quality of life.' [8] Buildings influence and reflect individuals and communities symbolically, but also emotionally and sensorially, playing a major part in both collective identity formation and individuals' sense of place [9] As Susan Bickford poignantly put it, 'the built environment also constructs intersubjectivity.'[10]

Because of this power, and especially because of generally shared beliefs about its fixity and endurance, [11] architecture has often been instrumentalised for political and social engineering. Buildings attest to various political regimes' desire to imprint a certain vision of the 'We' on the country's landscape and, more importantly, on the memory and bodies of their citizens. Because of the symbolic weight they can bear – weight that is exterior to architecture itself and that is imposed on it – buildings are often targeted with violence: in being associated with an order, a 'people', or a vision of the good they are vulnerable to the violence that aims to destroy that order, 'people' or vision.[12]

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[8] Colin St John Wilson, *Architectural Reflections: Studies in the Philosophy and Practice of Architecture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 25.
[9] Robert Yudell, 'Body Movement', in *Body, Memory, and Architecture*, ed. Kent Bloomer and Charles Moore (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 57–76.
[10] Susan Bickford, 'Constructing Inequality: City Spaces and the Architecture of Citizenship', *Political Theory* 28, no. 3 (2000): 355–76.
[11] Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies*, Public Planet Books (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007).
[12] For analyses of cultural cleansing targeting architecture, see Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory*. Herscher convincingly shows that sometimes this symbolic meaning is attached to architecture by the agents of destruction, that

While inviting certain ways of living and behaving, architecture never determines lives and behaviours unequivocally: 'The relationship between the social and the spatial is never a direct one. There are strong limits to it, occasioned in part by the value of abstraction in architectural design that permits the same place to have multiple meanings and prevents any single meaning from becoming definitive.'[13] The limited grip buildings have on people – dependent on the stability of a symbolic order predominant at a certain time and place – makes possible various ways of modifying and inhabiting them, ways that subvert, reinscribe and reinvent the built environment for new times, new relationships and new political visions, without thereby necessarily erasing completely the traces of the past.

The looseness of the relationship between architecture and politics cannot, however, be exclusively explained by reference to discourse. Architecture influences the sensorial experience of its inhabitants, facilitating or discouraging certain ways of moving and meeting in space. And yet, like its symbolic power, its physical capacity to influence behaviour is limited and a matter of degree: 'Architecture…has no kind of magic by which men can be redeemed or society transformed.' [14] Buildings enjoy various degrees of malleability, a function of both their public signification and physical distribution

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it does not pre-exist the act of violence. See Andrew Herscher, 'In Ruins. Architecture, Memory, Countermemory,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 4 (2014): 464–469, https://doi.org/10.1525/jsah.2014.73.4.464; Herscher, 'Warchitectural Theory.'

[13] Lawrence Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), 9.

[14] For a classic on architectural determinism's falsity, see Maurice Broady, 'Social Theory in Architectural Design', *Arena* 81, no. 898 (1966): 149-154.

of space: re-purposing face different opportunities and obstacles depending on this double malleability. This paper examines how these two dimensions of architecture's limited agency – symbolic and material – can be harnessed to foster political practices of imaginative political renewal in spaces that bear the marks of historical violence. Throughout, however, it remains sceptical of unreflective or celebratory hopes in architecture's emancipatory powers.

For a sense of hope to flourish in communities with a history of political violence, it requires spaces where imagination can delineate visions of a future-yet-unwritten, where new political relationships can be forged, and a political sense of feeling 'at home' grow again. However, political renewal does not happen in a vacuum: it remains anchored in the past. Visions of the future will of necessity be informed by past experiences, including experiences of violence and oppression: political memory provides the imagination with an anchorage and sources of meaning.

The account of the imagination presupposed here is active: it is something individuals do, building on past experiences and memories. Keightley and Pickering's path-breaking work[15] vividly articulates this important insight: both social processes of dealing with the past and envisaging a new future involve the simultaneous operations of memory and the imagination. Imagination helps us make a coherent sense of our fragmented past and of our sense of ourselves as individuals. We always remember as members of social groups, from within a certain social positioning: 'our personal remembering is

[15] Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering, *The Mnemonic Imagination Remembering as Creative Practice*, Palgrave (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

collective as we cannot step outside the sociality of our experience.'[16] Social frameworks of meaning influence how we remember and make coherent sense of our past via the imagination. This process is not, however, unidirectional: individuals' reinterpreting their experience using social codes also contributes – through variable appropriations – new meanings to the social common sense. Remembering is a creative process, individually and collectively. Memories of the past are reinvented and adjusted to the necessities of the present. The past anchors a group in the face of the uncertain future, while the imagination experiments with new ways of practicing old virtues. Public memory

> … operates through a discursive space in which we remember in common using cultural resources in two senses: the conventional systems of meaning which structure the ways in which we communicate our pasts and the symbolic resources which represent the second-hand experience of others. Within this discursive space, it is the mnemonic imagination which enables us to recognize and reconcile the past of the other and to situate our own pasts in relation to theirs. Popular memory is then the interspace of dialogue activated by the mnemonic imagination, between … ourselves, our close relations, and distant others.[17]

In the wake of political violence, the first challenge is to reflect on how we could open this discursive space to contested and competing narratives about the past, the present and the future. Given that no group is ever perfectly homogeneous and that members will remember differently from within their

[16] Ibid., 94.
[17] Ibid., 109–110.

positionality, how can we enable a variety of voices and visions to emerge within this space? How can individuals work together, sharing the burden of nurturing hope, valorising their different perspectives of the past and articulating their different visions for the future?

This paper proposes that architecture can serve as an armature, both symbolical and physical, for the interplay between the memory and the imagination in collective processes of creative, but no less contested, political renewal. I argue that the physical and symbolic parameters of scarred space influence how a community deals with their past in view of delineating the contours of a more hopeful future. Given architecture's capacity to facilitate relationships and visions, it can be mobilised to serve as an infrastructure for plural voices, kaleidoscopic visions and inclusive relations to emerge, thus contributing to the possibility of democratic politics. The mnemonic imagination works spatially and materially in more or less productive directions, depending on the malleability of the built environment, on the one hand, and the type of actors occupying it, on the other. In other words, the imaginative quest for new political visions and new forms of political association partially depends on the availability, physical shape and symbolic baggage of the spaces within which individuals can innovate conceptually, feel emotionally safe, and sensorially build a 'home' together.

But under what conditions and how can the mnemonic imagination work productively within the scars? To answer this question, this article now turns to the work of an architect who made post-catastrophic reconstruction the focus of his work: Lebbeus Woods.

Scars and the Mnemonic Imagination: A Sketch for an Alternative Future

Architects have often engaged with political theory and philosophy, searching for concepts and critical frameworks for their practice. This paper reverses the relationship and reads Lebbeus Woods's architectural theory as political theory.[18] It celebrates Woods's supplying us with fresh theoretical tools for problematizing political transformation and for answering our central question: How can a community engage with its architectural scars in a way that enables a productive relationship between memory and the imagination, fostering hopes in the possibility of a different future in the aftermath of political violence?

Refusing to see architecture as merely a backdrop for action, Woods assumes the built environment's participation in our ever-changing social lives. In a social world marred by injustices and exclusions, Woods sees crises – war, capitalist oppression, natural disasters – simultaneously as catastrophes and opportunities for working on a painful history in view of fostering an inclusive, egalitarian future. His writings on radical reconstruction provide a vision of how we might integrate a difficult past, without erasing or disguising it. He proposes a healthy preservation of *scars* of all kinds, an honest acceptance of what has happened, and a lucid reckoning with the need to start afresh. His work thus supplies some much-needed theoretical inspiration for addressing our guiding question and outlining the contours of a potential account of architectural TJ.

[18] Henmi discusses Woods's drawings and models in a retrospective exhibition: 'Lebbeus Woods: Constructing Worlds,' *Journal of Architectural Education* 67 (2013): 331–32.

Architecture 'pulls people together' and is 'formative of a community, of its continual making.'[19] Because of this power, architects must place 'far greater emphasis on architecture's responsibility for and role in political and social changes, and therefore on the architect's personal reflectivity, research and responsibility.'[20] Architecture's role is that of a facilitator, of a *provocateur*, a helper: it can enable or obstruct, but it cannot – and should not aim to – determine: 'architects of the spaces within the walls do not make predictive designs. Rather, they produce visual evocations that, however precise and detailed, are intended only as heuristic aids, guides that will stimulate transformations by others.'[21]

'War' is understood by Woods generically to cover a variety of forms of destruction, from military violence, to natural disaster and capitalist erosion:

> Whenever established ideas are under attack by new ones, there is war. Whenever people are displaced by 'progress' or caused to suffer because of what they know or believe, there is war. Wherever landscapes are rapidly transformed by new technologies or ideologies, there is war. And let no one forget the eternal war of 'man against nature.' The destruction during times of peace, in terms of lives, property and 'values,' is no less than during war, but only less acknowledged.[22]

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[19] Lebbeus Woods, *Radical Reconstruction* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), 19.
[20] Ibid., 22.
[21] Woods, 13. Woods famously proclaimed that 'The architect as a controlling figure is a tyranny that is over.' Cited in Jack Self, "Rendering Speculations, London, UK," *Architectural Review* 228, no. 0003861X (2010): 94–95.
[22] Woods, *Radical Reconstruction*, 25.

War brings about the need – and the opportunity – to conceive of space in new ways, but also to build and inhabit it differently. In other words, new forms of subjectification – new practices of living must develop, since war changes mental landscapes, bringing about the loss of the familiar, the predictable, the reassuring, the routinized. Architects working in the wake of violence will thus have to invent new physical spaces and modalities of constructing – technically but also ethically – so as to invite 'new ways of moving or resting in space, new and always transforming relationships between both people and things.'[23] In acknowledging the relationality and materiality of sharing a world, Woods gets us closer to understanding what it means to renew it politically and, implicitly, what it takes to cultivate political hope.

Woods does not over-value the power of the architectural form. It is up to those individuals who find themselves in the newly moulded places to reinvent their relationships in ways that neither fully erase the past, nor remain captive to it. He translates architecturally a rejection of the nostalgic uses of memory: restoration of the built environment that preceded the war is 'a folly that not only denies the post-war conditions, but impedes the emergence of an urban fabric and way of life based on them.'[24] Simultaneously, he rejects the idea of expunging the memories of loss and tragedy: this would amount to an embrace of a *tabula rasa* on which to create new worlds. History and its loss cannot be denied, vulnerability and failures must be accepted and used

[23] Ibid., 13.
[24] Ibid., 15. The post-WWII restoration of Warsaw's Old Town or Dresden's Cathedral reflects architectural nostalgia.

imaginatively to create a present in which the remembered meets the hoped for:

> Now there is no choice but to invent something new, which nevertheless must begin with the damaged old, a new that neither mimics what has been lost nor forgets the losing, a new that begins today, in the moment of loss's most acute self-reflection.[25]

In relation to existing ideas and systems of knowledge Woods explicitly recommends pushing them at the margins. Renewal requires conceptual extension and reinvention – a process that, as we shall see, necessarily presupposes the interplay of memory and the imagination. Woods's value for this paper lies in the fact that he pays heed to the material armature that might creatively bring these faculties together.

But how exactly does architecture serve as enabler of renewal? 'New ways of thinking, living and shaping space'[26] can emerge from the combined effect of the tears created by explosions and fires, on the one hand, and the structures the architect injects in the spaces emerging between tears, on the other. Tears are unique in shape and history; their very existence can prompt conceptual and narrative, but also material-sensorial improvisation. Rejecting cosmetic uses of architecture, Woods introduces the concepts of *scab* and *scar. Scabs* refer to a first layer of architectural engagement with tears, whereas *scars* fuse 'the new and the old, reconciling, coalescing them, without compromising either one in the name of some contextual form of unity.'[27]

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[25] Ibid., 27.
[26] Ibid., 27.
[27] Ibid., 16.

Accepting the *scar* as something that *is* and cannot be undone amounts to taking responsibility for the past, for its losses and tragedies, but also a precondition for the possibility of a future that can grow from the torn tissue. *Scars* anchor and feed the imagination in ways that enable its creative encounter with memory. Therefore, the architect 'must love history for the forms of hope it offers, but must also clear the air, even by the suspect means of transforming the sacred remnants of the past into disposable remnants for the future.'[28] The future cannot be disconnected from history. However, history provides hope only with a frame, conceptual and material resources, and not with fully fledged answers.

The structures inserted between *scars* and *scabs* contain *freespaces*, which can no longer be occupied by old ways of living and thinking:

> They are, in fact, difficult to occupy, and require inventiveness in order to become habitable. They are not predesigned, predetermined, predictable or predictive… rather, they offer a dense matrix of new conditions as an armature for living as fully as possible in the present, for living experimentally.[29]

New meanings depend on improvisation within free spaces, and this involves the creative use of the imagination in common with others. It also requires individuals to collectively assume responsibility for the future. Woods argues for spaces where old hierarchies are replaced by heterarchical – egalitarian – relations between free individuals, committed to resuscitating the community

[28] Ibid., 29.
[29] Ibid., 16.

though a joint effort: 'Freespace has no function that can be identified in advance, but only a set of potentials for occupation arising from material conditions.'[30] The material conditions, however, are not merely material: they also bear the traces of the symbolic order that brought them into being. Woods is committed to equality as an ordering principle for he believes that only the inhabitants of freespaces – driven by compassion and comradeship, ingenuity and inventiveness – can build new knowledges that take root in the interstitial spaces between *scars* and *scabs*. Architecture stimulates unconventional activities, practices of discovery and a confrontation with freedom. There is only one precondition: freespaces can stimulate radical hope to the extent that responsibility and power are shared collaboratively.

It is important to clarify that, while modest in its power, architecture is not neutral, in that it aims to create spaces free of predetermined purposes and meaning, simultaneously inviting people to relate to each other as equals and urging them to remain anchored in *scabs* and *scars* – both symbolic and material. For Woods, architecture should aim to facilitate the development of a new sense of community from the alienation and isolation brought about by violence: civic cooperation is the only basis for reinvention and architecture can capture and sustain the new social 'flows and floods'.[31] Woods rejects grand visions, unified masterplans and pre-packaged blueprints for common life as they exclude free improvisation by ordinary citizens who work and dream together. He writes:

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[30] Ibid., 26.
[31] Ibid., 29.

> Architects, in this sense, do not dictate a final product, but provide precise models and clear principles that the community can interpret and develop in built form with great subtlety.[32]

Radical architecture is one in which one does not yet know how to behave. Uncertainty is the preeminent feature of renewal. Several metaphors capture the dynamism, the imaginative force and courage necessary for individuals to celebrate the unknown and create a world of freedom and flourishing after violence: it is the 'itinerant', the 'Gypsies', those who belong to 'circuses' who can take up the task of renewal. The itinerant possess qualities that the static, the sentimental and the pathetic do not: they embrace the uncertainty characterizing new beginnings and experiment with *scabs*, *scars* and *freespaces*, constructing new values and new spaces within the existential remnants of war, broadly understood. Accepting and working with uncertainty is difficult, it requires eccentricity and a gusto for self-invention, spontaneity and play.[33]

While Woods's language embraces ambiguity, oscillating between the metaphorical and the literal, he makes it very clear that it is only through a head-on, creative confrontation with *both* the past's symbolic weight and its materiality that hope can flourish again. The symbolic and the material are

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[32] One might read this as the leader's return in another guise. However, the architect trusts the task of reinvention to the community's members. No exemplary, centralized vision is imposed on them. Woods clarifies: '...new ideas and inventiveness are not an option to be taken up by a creative few, but a necessity for everyone.' Ibid., 19. If we can at all speak of Wood's utopianism, his is a modest, grounded, democratic and open utopia, and a risky project too, depending for its success on the subjects inhabiting it.

[33] See also his 'Wild City,' Architectural Design 69, no. 7/8 (1999): 70–73.

loosely – yet indisputably connected – and they both affect visions, emotions and individuals' sense of a place, falling short of determining them. It is the very looseness of the connection between the symbolic and the material that makes it possible for the mnemonic imagination to open new horizons, thus making political hope possible. Concepts like *scars*, *scabs* and *freespaces* capture the indissoluble relationship between memory and the imagination, between meaning and materiality. Political hope in the possibility of new ways of organising one's community can flourish in *freespaces* where people can meet on equal footing and together take responsibility for the uncertain future.

While Woods's project helps conceptualise more precisely architecture's relation to the mnemonic imagination, this paper expands its claims in two directions. First, while the architect starts with an account of war that seems to accommodate an idea of scar as the result of construction, his reconstruction plans focus on destroyed architecture – by natural phenomena such as earthquakes (San Francisco), war (Sarajevo) and capitalist erosion (Havana). His scars emerge as the result of tearing, of explosions, fires, collapse – not of building. This paper acknowledges ruins but seeks to expand the concept of scar to purposefully built architecture that participated in political violence. Focusing on ruins renders us blind to this other association between architecture and violence. As Herscher and Iyer Siddiqi write

> 'Spatial violence' … may be understood not as something inflicted on architecture from the outside, but something that architecture inflicts even as it follows its own practices and protocols. [34]

[34] Herscher and Iyer Siddiqi, "Spatial Violence," 269.

In focusing on ruins, Woods risks embracing the standard view, according to which architecture is a repository of memory and culture, targeted by external violence, obscuring how violence can be internal to architecture and how cultures of violence are embedded architecturally.[35] Most evidently, torture centres, forced labour or internment camps or military installations constitute the armature of political violence. The buildings introduced as case studies in the third section of this paper have been built using enslaved labour, by a violent order, for its belligerent purposes. Located within the fabric of cities, they too, I argue, constitute scars that need to be addressed architecturally – symbolically and materially – by the successor political order to distance itself from the project underpinning these constructions, without thereby denying the losses the community suffered.

Second, a note on the agents of renewal. Those who can make the best of the freespaces the architect opens up do not come fully formed as 'itinerant', 'Gypsy', 'circus people'. Woods tells us that collective reinvention is facilitated by an unfamiliar architecture which one does not yet know how to inhabit, but one which fosters a future of equality. Therefore, courage and a shared appetite for conceptual, relational and sensorial experimentation are necessary ingredients for efficacious efforts to foster political renewal. This paper adds a correction to this view. While individuals' prior experiences and existing dispositions will necessarily play a role, their improvisational practices will also respond and be shaped by entering the unfamiliar architecture together. Instead of thinking about courage and the appetite for

[35] For an ambitious version of this argument, see Herscher, 'Warchitectural Theory,' 39.

experimentation as fully formed or pre-existing the experience of freespaces, we need to acknowledge their potential stimulation and transformation *through* that very experience. Intuitively, transforming a building physically and symbolically triggers a change in how those inhabiting it conceive of it, but also of themselves as its inhabitants and users. Those who occupy freespaces might thus become more experimental, more courageous, more inventive because they do not know yet how to live in the freespace. Therefore, to fully account for architecture's (however modest) force it is thus necessary to see processes of subjectification as open-ended and at least partially shaped by the material environment.

The first two sections of this paper have threaded programmatic, theoretical ground. The following section introduces two examples that give some concreteness to the ideas sketched above about the relationship between architecture, memory, imagination and renewal. The buildings analysed below, I argue, come closest to approximating our theoretical proposal in practice. They stood uncomfortably for long periods with the post-WWII ideological settlement, occupying rather prominent locations within the public space of successor democratic orders. The tension between their very material existence and the meaning attached to them, on the one hand, and the democratic orders the communities embraced provided an opportunity to intervene architecturally in search of a different future that does not, however, repudiate the shameful past. In what follows, I suggest they potentially exemplify the idea of architectural TJ.

The Towers

During WWII, Germany built several Flak Towers (Fliegerabwehrkanonentürme) – massive, reinforced concrete structures used as platforms for anti-aircraft weaponry and ammunition storage. Berlin, Hamburg and Vienna were chosen as sites, due to their strategic value. Designed by Friedrich Tamms, they were built by enslaved labourers. The Arenbergpark tower in Vienna – currently an art depot for the Museum of Applied Arts – still bears graffiti by its constructors, containing information about their nationality, working conditions, and despair. All towers were equipped with roof turrets for mounting heavy artillery.[36] They were also meant to showcase the might of the German war machine and reassure civilians regarding the British bombing campaigns. They were built in what has been considered a neo-Romantic style, with hints of Medieval times.[37] Hitler had planned to have them covered in marble after the war, to give them a monumental function: the names of all German soldiers killed in battle would have been carved on the exterior walls. [38] During the war, however, they were used exclusively for defence purposes: rather ineffectively against Allied air attacks,[39] but also for stowing various goods, including artworks. They served as shelters during air bombing raids: equipped to be self-sufficient, they could house thousands of

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[36] Michael Foedrowitz, *The Flak Towers in Berlin, Hamburg and Vienna, 1940-1950* (Atglen, Penn.: Schiffer Military/Aviation History, 1998). For a general discussion of bunkers in warfare, especially the Atlantic Wall, see Paul Virilio, *Bunker Archaeology* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009).

[37] Steven Zaloga, *Defense of the Third Reich 1941–45* (Botley: Osprey Publishing, 2012).

[38] Robin Stummer, 'Secret History,' *The Statesman*, 2008.

[39] For a military analysis see Edward Westermann, *Flak: German Anti-Aircraft Defenses, 1914-1945* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001).

civilians for extensive periods of time.[40] Some of them incorporated fully functioning hospitals: the Berlin Zoo Flak Tower had 95 beds and two operating theatres.[41] After the war, many could not be demolished without risk to the neighbouring buildings. Consequently, they continue to dot urban landscapes today.

For the purposes of my argument, I discuss two Flak Towers: one in Vienna' Esterházy Park and another in Hamburg, on Neuhöfer Strasse. Both are *scars* on the face of post-war cities, into which architects have injected *freespaces* where memory and imagination come together to draw the contours of the future, while acknowledging the conceptual, emotional and sensorial losses their own participation in the past war brought about. However, this section does not intervene in debates over architectural conservation or memorialisation.[42] Nor it is motivated by pragmatic concerns about building re-use. The towers are discussed with a view to pointing out how architecture might play a role – however limited – in facilitating the type of interplay between memory and the imagination that can feed a community's hope.

The Flak Tower in Vienna's Esterházy Park, one of the eight surviving towers in Europe, currently houses a large aquarium that attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors yearly. Initially owned by the city, it is now the property of

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[40]J. E. Kaufmann, H. W. Kaufmann, and Robert Jurga, *Fortress Third Reich: German Fortifications and Defense Systems in World War II* (Cambridge: DaCapo Press, 2003).

[41] Foedrowitz, *The Flak Towers*, 7.

[42] Using scars for memorialisation forecloses improvisation and experimentation, curtailing freedom by fixing meaning. This is not to reject the use of scars for memorialisation but only to clarify that Hiroshima's Peace Memorial, Ground Zero and the German Reichstag are not freespaces, as proposed here.

a non-profit organisation. Until recently, it has been generously subsidized by the city of Vienna.[43] In 1998, the Austrian Alpine Club installed a 47-metre tall climbing wall, affixing 4000 mountaineering grips and footholds[44] on the outside of the tower. A café and an impressive viewing platform are located on the 11th floor.

Haus des Meeres, by Thomas Ledl (Own work).

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The attempts to simultaneously reinvent the building while recognizing its dark memory are dated post-1988, the 50th anniversary of the Anschluss, a year of

[43] For the management structure, see Artware Multimedia GmbH, 'HAUS Des MEERES Allgemeine Informationen', accessed 27 November 2017, https://www.haus-des-meeres.at/Allgemein-Info.htm.

[44] Shane Peterson, 'Projection Spaces: Manifestations of the Alpine in the Reception of the Austrian 'Heimatfilm Echo Der Berge' and of the Vienna Flak Towers,' *Austrian Studies* 18 (2010): 124–40.

turbulent reckoning with Austria's participation in the Shoah, punctuated by the Waldheim affair and the scandal around Thomas Bernhard's *Heldenplatz*.[45] These were all private initiatives, mainly by scientists, artists and charities[46] – the 'Gypsy', 'migrants' and 'circus' people that Woods celebrates – who take on the task of opening and inhabiting the *freespace* within the *scar*.

Climbing Wall at House des Meeres, by Vmenkov (Own work) [GFDL (http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html) or CC BY-SA 4.0-3.0-2.5-2.0-1.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0-3.0-2.5-2.0-1.0)], via Wikimedia Commons

The aquarium, climbing wall and café capture the imagination, allowing various appropriations by the visitors. Yet these future-oriented adaptations are anchored in the memory of the war. The very resilience of the tower makes it a stable reminder of the violence of the past, physically and discursively. A giant

[45] For a discussion of 1988's impact on Austrian identity see Mihaela Mihai, 'Denouncing Historical "Misfortunes": From Passive Injustice to Reflective Spectatorship,' *Political Theory* 42 (2014): 443–67.
[46] Peterson, 'Projection Spaces', 138.

text box has been placed on top of the old Command Tower, proclaiming conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner's message: 'Smashed to Pieces… In the Still of the Night'. While the artwork hints at the tower's function during World War II, it remains sufficiently ambiguous to allow for a variety of interpretations. Hoisted on a tower remarkable for its invulnerability, the installation was initially meant to be temporarily exhibited during the prestigious Wiener Festwochen in 1991. However, due to public support, the installation became permanent. Dislocating the foundational myth that Austria had been Hitler's first victim rather than its welcoming partner – the stairwell between the 6th and 10th floors hosts an exhibition entitled 'Remembering Inside,' documenting the dark history of the tower. Another exhibition about the use of the towers in the Third Reich was initiated in 2009, benefitting from historian Marcello LaSperanza's efforts to prevent any glorification of the construction's technological qualities. The gravel at the bottom of the shark tank – one of the largest in Europe – is made of rubble resulting from the refurbishment works. While various artists and organisations proposed to cover the façade of the tower (by draping, panelling or painting it), it has kept its original finish, as testimony to its past, both visually and kinesthetically.[47] Thus, contrary to public intellectuals' fears, as new ways of moving in the building, of inhabiting and appropriating it were invented in the last few decades, no elision of memory has happened.

The insertion of new spaces within this architectural *scar* invites – without guaranteeing – a responsible dynamic between memory and the imagination. Climbing the tower on the exterior changes how one physically

[47] Ibid.

moves in relation to the building. Moreover, this is more than just a practical recuperation for public use of an encumbering, indestructible structure: it suggests the need to work through and own – without ever fully mastering – an inescapable history of violence. While some have worried about the Alpine Club's historically problematic anti-Semitic stance during the war,[48] and the strong association between Austrian identity and the Alps, [49] this article argues that the nationalist subtext is neutralized, first, by its remaining unpanelled, and hence obviously not a mountain, but a war construction. The reference to the Alps is recuperated architecturally through a discourse of health and fitness that is not racialised. Moreover, the outside the tower is bare and grey, as initially designed, unmistakably a *scar* that refuses to heal completely. Second, on the inside, the public navigates among the various fish tanks in search of knowledge about the natural world, yet permanently reminded of the initial use of the building through the historical exhibit. The café on the last floor offers visitors a view over the city, while the art installation keeps reminding them that the searchlights of German heavy artillery had been searching the sky for enemy planes, to be 'smashed in the still of the night.'

Thus, a new space of meaning, one in which visitors encounter each other as equals, has opened interstitially within the scar. The architectural imagination is anchored in the past – for memory provides it with a variety of elements on which it can build, without thereby remaining its hostage.

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[48] Bruce Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution: A History of Austrian Anti-Semitism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

[49] The debate opposes those who worry about the deletion of history through parasitic architecture and those who fear the entrenchment of nationalist identity. Peterson, 'Projection Spaces', 136–137.

Memorialisation projects are inserted between spaces dedicated to activities unrelated to war and violence, thus inviting a complex, multi-layered experience. The tower confronts visitors symbolically and materially with the memory of past suffering, but also with reinvented references to symbols of Austrian identity, such as the Alps, technological capacity and progress. The sources memory provides for the imagination are both related to the lifeworld that engendered and was destroyed by the war and the war itself as generative of new meanings. Simultaneously, however, it summons their imagination to find a way of navigating and inhabiting it in new ways, that go beyond its former, destructive use. However, the effects suggested by the architectural restructuring of the tower can only be brought about by its inhabitants for, as I argued above, architecture's agency is at best that of a provocateur.

The second Flak Tower discussed here is situated in Wilhelmsburg, Hamburg. Built in 1943, it too served as a platform for anti-aircraft artillery and sheltering civilians, although those defined as 'undesirable' by the Nazi regime were refused refuge inside during bombing raids. It also housed a military hospital. After the war, the British tried – but only partially managed to – demolish it from the inside: six of its floors collapsed as the result of a controlled explosion.[50] The attempt to obliterate the *scar* from the city's landscape failed due to the resilience of the construction's shell, but also because of worries

[50] For the technical details I rely on IBA Hamburg, 'Whitepaper Energiebunker'. (Hamburg, 2014), accessed 27 November 2017, http://www.iba-hamburg.de/en/iba-hamburg-gmbh/service/downloads/medien/liste/gefiltert/medien-kategorie/15/project/energy-bunker.html.

regarding the potentially destructive effect of any further explosions on the neighbouring residential areas.

For the next four decades, only some of its areas were intermittently used, the structure gradually falling into disrepair. By the end of the 20th C, the costs of demolishing it were estimated at between 5 and 12 million EUR.[51] In 2001, however, the tower was legally protected: its testifying to Germany's role in World War II, but also to the Allies' demilitarisation efforts (as reflected in their dynamiting of the Tower) qualified it for preservation.

Energiebunker Wilhelmsburg Südseite, by NordNordWest, Commons by-sa-3.0 de [CC BY-SA 3.0 de (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/de/deed.en)], via Wikimedia Commons

In 2010, its conversion into a green power plant began, with great success. Consultation sessions with local residents and their representatives was a main

[51] Ibid.

feature of the process. The renovation was financed through the European Union's Regional Development Fund and the Free Hanseatic City of Hamburg. As part of a greater development plan meant to provide the Elbe islands with renewable forms of energy, the Flak Tower generates energy from the sun, biogas, wood chips, and waste heat from a nearby factory. It can, on its own, supply most of the homes in the district with heat and electricity. It also feeds renewable power into the general electricity grid. The interior of the tower is occupied by a large heat reservoir of 2000 cubic meters, while its roof and sidewalls are covered in solar panels. Like the Viennese tower, it also features a café that boasts views of the city. A platform formerly used for smaller guns has been transformed into a panoramic viewing terrace. Recycled plastic chairs – the product of an activists' programme entitled 'Social Plastic,'[52] led by artist Gherhardt Bär and involving local pupils – can be found in the areas accessible to visitors.

The Energiebunker was integrated in the International Building Exhibition.[53] It received three awards for its imaginative reinvention of the war construction: the European prize for solar energy, 'Solarpreis' 2013, the TGA Award in 2014, and an honorable mention by the Architectural Award 'BDA Hamburg Architektur Preis' in 2014. The makeover of the building itself, as well

[52] See "Home - Social Plastics," accessed November 27, 2017, http://socialplastics.com/index.

[53] For an account of the ideological future-orientedness of International Building Exhibitions as planning strategies and their commitment to theoretical-practical experimentation, see Jan Gerbitz, Karla Müller, and Katharina Jacob, 'Implementation Plan: Hamburg, Wilhelmsburg' (Hamburg: IBA Hamburg GmbH, December 2014), accessed 27 November 2017, http://urbantransform.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/07/D4.2-Hamburg.pdf.

as its integration into a local energy grid, are part of a much larger environmentally sustainable plan for the city.[54]

Energiebunker Wilhelmsburg (vormals Flakturm VI) Photovoltaikanlage an der Südwand, by Hinnerk Rümenapf,
[CC BY-SA 4.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0)], via Wikimedia Commons

This second tower highlights how the architectural imagination hoped to provide new sources for a collective reflection on collective identity. From a structure built to serve as part of the destructive German war machine, the architects suggested its reinvention as a producer and receptacle of clean light

[54] For a discussion of the greater vision to which the Tower belonged, see Sabina Kuc, 'Hamburg 2013 – The Way of Creating New Landscape', *GSTF Journal of Engineering Technology (JET)* 4, no. 1 (2016): 39–45 and Gerbitz, Müller, and Jacob, 'Implementation Plan: Hamburg, Wilhelmsburg'.

and heat for an entire neighbourhood. In their white paper, the constructors explain their vision for the tower as connecting the past with a future,[55] as a mean to repurpose a protected building for the next generation. The concept behind the refurbishing of the building focuses on the sustainability and local devolution of energy production. A hope for an alternative future is projected onto the building, encouraging similar reactions from the users. This is a vision where environmental sustainability – and not war – is the main concern and focus of technological innovation. The value of technological capacity is attached to a new vision of the future. In this sense, the structure attempts to materialise an alternative vision of technological modernity. Emblematically, one of the roof openings through which the barrels of flak artillery were pointed at the sky is currently used for the metal pillars supporting the photovoltaic cell panels that cover the building (see photo below). As such, it is meant to inspire a radical hope in the possibility of a future where communities can balance energy needs against the protection of the environment.

[55] IBA Hamburg, 'Whitepaper Energiebunker'.

Energiebunker Wilhelmsburg (vormals Flakturm VI) Ehemalige Geschützstellung, jetzt Verankerung des Gerüsts der Solarthermieanlage by Hinnerk Rümenapf
[CC BY-SA 4.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0)], via Wikimedia Commons

And yet, this vision and hope in a different future is moored in the unsavoury history of the building. Unprecedented in its nature, the project raised important technical challenges, some of which could not be overcome without compromising the imperative of preservation.[56] Paradoxically, it is because of these compromises that the architects were forced to avoid what Woods might call a nostalgic relationship to the past. While the main structure was preserved, it had to be reinforced with pillars and supporting walls, necessary for making the building safe again. The space inside was redistributed to make room for the energy plant's installations, but also for the public spaces. On the outside, the metal skeleton that supports the solar panels does not affect the general perspective of the building: it remains, in its monstrosity, as dominant as ever over the immediate neighbourhood. By 2010 the façade had suffered so much damage that it could not be preserved in its entirety. Most of the shell was covered with rough, gunned concrete in order not to obscure its former violent use. Original observation windows and some sections of the original

[56] In their Whitepaper, the constructors explain how renovation work preserved as much as possible from the original construction, something deemed important for both memorialization and cost reduction.

façade are visible at various places, including on the viewing platform, as scars upon the scar.[57]

Moreover, throughout the entire duration of the renovation, a public, interactive programme of events entitled 'Klotz im Park' ('Monstrosity in the Park') were organized by the Wilhelmsburg and Hafen History Workshops. Through public events and discussions with members of the public, it collated and preserved memories that intersected with the history of the Flak Tower. Pupils from a neighbouring school met and interviewed survivors who were children during the war.[58] Some of the data collected is integrated in the bunker's permanent exhibition, which currently occupies 20 different areas in the tower. It traces its history, from artillery platform, to ruin and rebirth.

Both Flak Towers illuminate how architecture can simultaneously preserve memory through *scars*, anchoring the imagination and allowing for the insertion of new *freespaces* where inhabitants could potentially learn to think and move differently, and especially to hope and improvise. Architecture proposes a reinvention and adjustment of old, tainted values – Alpine identity, technological prowess, progress – to new needs, aspirations and realities. War buildings are reconfigured in an attempt to render them supportive of peaceful purposes: sustainability and learning, sport, public health and art. Therefore, I argue that, in embracing new orders of meaning and changing the distribution

[57] For pictures of the old façade and observation windows see IBA Hamburg, 'Whitepaper Energiebunker,' 36–37.

[58] Geschichtswerkstatt Wilhelmsburg & Hafen, 'Klotz Im Park - Die Bunkerumwandlung 2009 - 2013', *Geschichtswerkstatt-Wilhelmsburgs Webseite!*, accessed 27 November 2017, http://www.geschichtswerkstatt-wilhelmsburg.de/bunker/klotz-im-park/.

of space inside, the bunkers can be read as innovative ways of integrating a shameful past in the landscape of the city, expressions of an effort to stimulate new relations and senses of place. I suggest the two towers can be interpreted as an instantiation of what I have tentatively termed architectural TJ – a process that, while grounded in an acknowledged history, reaches out into a different future, without any guarantee of success.

Conclusion

'All architecture functions as potential stimulus for movement, real or imagined. A building is an incitement to action, a stage for movement and interaction. It is one partner in a dialogue with the body.'[59] This article has argued that architecture can play a role in sustaining political renewal and hope in the possibility of a different future in the wake of political violence. It constitutes an element of the physical and symbolic infrastructure that can either enable or stifle new visions, relations and a new sense of place. Under certain conditions, it anchors improvisation trough the *scabs* and *scars* of the past, while simultaneously integrating them into *freespaces* of freedom and uncertainty. These functions are central to a project that, I hope to have argued, can be called architectural TJ.

Before concluding, I address several potential objections.[60]

First, one might wonder about this proposal's scope of applicability: ethically speaking, what buildings lend themselves to such interventions, and

[59] Yudell, 'Body Movement', 59.
[60] I thank the anonymous reviewers for inviting me to reflect on these critical points.

which buildings do not? This paper has not aimed to articulate a formula that could be applied across the board to all architectural scars. Of course, it is very difficult to draw a clear line between the buildings that ethically require to be 'frozen' as purely commemorative sites – the Nazi extermination camps being the most evident example – and those that could ethically allow for the architectural interventions I proposed in this paper. Which buildings can support architectural intervention will ultimately be a matter of political decision-making, hopefully one that is inclusive of the ethically relevant voices – victims', survivors', and their descendants'. To the extent that such a decision supports architectural work on the scar, I hope to have provided some conceptual tools and programmatic ideas about how we can prop political renewal and practices of freedom architecturally.

Second, one might be reasonably sceptical about the juxtaposition of the terms 'architectural' and 'transitional justice'. Is 'transitional justice' the right 'umbrella' term, given the criticisms formulated about it in the last few years? Aware of the ample critical work about the language of TJ – to which this author has also contributed – I use this term tentatively to reach the academic audience that has proven receptive and self-reflexive in response to these criticisms. To the extent that this paper comments on processes of dealing with a past of violence in a way that is ethically informed and democratically motivated, I hope to draw this audience's attention to a particular – so far little explored – aspect of such processes. Given the limited and contingent – as opposed to determinant – role I assign to architecture, I hope to have avoided the problematic strongly prescriptive, teleological and de-contextualised tone of certain strands of TJ discourse.

Third and relatedly, is the overstretching of TJ to cover yet another aspect contributing to the term's dilution? On the one hand, there is always an inescapable risk involved in trying to subsume too much under any given concept. On the other, a too rigid concern with the precision of labels might blind us to the epistemic insights we might get when we play more loosely with our concepts, pushing them in what may appear as unexpected or unnatural directions. The question mark in the title gestures to this author's awareness of this tension and to the tentativeness of her proposal. Even if this conceptual stretching will be rejected by the community of researchers addressed here, the substance of the papers' argument remains valid beyond labels.

Fourth, is the past understood here merely as tragedy and loss? The answer to this question must necessarily be contextual. The past constrains how we can imagine the future, as our imagination never starts from scratch. According to Woods, the scar is composed of both old and new tissue. The Flak Towers repurpose ideas of progress and technological development for a different, peaceful future. However, these ideas cannot always be neatly separated from political violence itself as the other source of meaning for the imagination. Moreover, in some TJ contexts past orders of meaning engendered violence, in others they were destroyed by external forces. Which concepts, ideas, references, relationships and structures are recoverable for a future of peace and democracy is a function of their conceptual malleability and compatibility with values of equality and freedom. Imagination will work with meanings created by reconfiguring elements of lost worlds, as well as meanings generated by violence itself.

Fifth, a critic could plausibly point out that our account of egalitarian occupations is naïve in that it disregards architecture's positioning in hierarchical systems of patronage, ideology and capitalist production. While acknowledging that architecture – as any other system of knowledge – is part of power constellations, this article has merely pointed out what architecture can do and has sometimes done. To overly cynical and deterministic accounts of architecture's servility to ideological and consumerist imperatives, we oppose examples of how freedom can – and has been – architecturally invited. Moreover, in discussing the loose and limited connections between the symbolic and the material, we hope to have demystified simplistic understandings of the relationship between dominant orders of meaning and the built environment, thus opening the way for imaginative re-signification and re-invention of scars of all kinds.

Lastly, one could argue that the argument introduced here is overly optimistic in that it assumes individuals' willingness and capacity to imaginatively occupy them. In the wake of violence, hatred and distrust will most likely characterise social relationships. At best, agonistic encounters, contestation and negotiation will dominate in the freespace. There is an ineliminable risk, however, that the political visions inserted in freespaces might result in new forms of violence, intentionally or inadvertently.[61] Throughout the

[61] For the nefarious effects of the Wilhelmsburg project, see Peter Birke, Florian Hohenstatt, and Moritz Rinn, 'Gentrification, Social Action and "Role-Playing": Experiences Garnered on the Outskirts of Hamburg', *International Journal of Action Research* 11 (2015): 195–227.

article, however, I have emphasized that architecture can invite and facilitate, but not determine action. I have argued against an image of the architect as a demiurge and I acknowledge the risks associated to any programme centred on freedom and improvisation. Architecture's invitation needs to be met half way through by individuals committed to living together freely and committed to equality. Architectural TJ is only a facet of broader processes of transformation and reconciliation in the wake of violence. Even under propitious circumstances, the risk cannot be eliminated: unintended consequences, inescapably related to freedom, might undermine the inhabitants' vision. But that is something the architect – as well as the student of politics – needs to resign herself to.